

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 19, 2009 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, November 19, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Korth at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Korth called the roll. Present: Chairperson Korth, Commissioners Easter, Gutierrez, Lowry, Paul and Treasurer Rhoades. Also present: Planning Director Ferro. Absent: Commissioner Butterfield.

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion by Rhoades, second by Paul to elect Sarah Easter as Secretary, David Gutierrez as Vice Chairperson, and Tom Korth as Chairperson. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Gutierrez, second by Rhoades to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 15 AND OCTOBER 28, 2009 MEETINGS

Motion by Easter, second by Gutierrez, to approve the October 15 and October 28, 2009 meeting minutes, with the following addition to the October 28 minutes: under agenda item IV.1, add the following: "Lowry mentioned that the M-21 and Knapp Street bridges need to be looked at individually because of their designs wherein M-21 is a 4-lane bridge and Knapp is a 2-lane bridge." Motion passed unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Request for Special Use Permit for Addition of Drive-Through Services Facilities, 5110 Cascade Rd., SE (Parcel No. 41-15-31-376-004), Flagstar Bank

Timothy Stoepker presented the request on behalf of Flagstar Bank. He stated that they have submitted a detailed site plan with engineering for the drive-through facility which complies with the ordinance standards. He stated the drive-through is located in an area with an existing large impervious surface, and as a result, there is very little added impervious area. He said the drive-through lanes do not conflict with any existing parking or sidewalks. The lighting under the drive-through canopy will be shielded. He addressed traffic patterns on Cascade Rd., and noted that there is a continuous center turn lane on Cascade Rd., and that traffic generation from banks has decreased significantly with the increased use of electronic banking. He concluded that they believe their plan complies with each and every element of the site plan criteria as well as the four special land use standards set forth in the ordinance.

Ferro commented that the existing building on the property is just below 5,000 square feet in floor area. Land use on surrounding properties is exclusively office-service uses, and there are no nearly residential uses. Ferro confirmed that nearly all of the area proposed for the drive-through is an existing paved area. The landscaping proposed is fairly intense and exceeds the minimum screening requirements for property boundary buffering. Ferro stated that he recommends approval, subject to the Planning Commission making a determination that the standards for special use permit approval set forth in the zoning regulations are satisfied.

Korth opened the public hearing. There were no comments and the hearing was closed.

Paul stated he would encourage them to follow through on the site plan as presented, especially in the landscaping proposed and he would support this. Easter agreed. Gutierrez mentioned that Commissioner Butterfield was concerned about the lighting on this plan. Ferro stated the proposed under-canopy lighting is recessed and screened by the soffit on the canopy perimeter. Korth asked Ferro if there is any other lighting on the site that is not shielded and should be retrofitted. Ferro stated he did not specifically consider existing lighting on his site visit, and could not answer this question. Easter asked if there is a time-line for completion of this project. Ferro said he believes it would be in the spring.

Motion by Easter, second by Paul, to approve Flagstar Bank's request for special use permit for an addition of drive-through services facilities at 5110 Cascade Rd., SE (Parcel No. 41-15-31-376-004), subject to the condition that any existing exterior lighting that is not shielded, cutoff lighting and that causes off-site glare shall be retrofitted with cutoff lighting, based on a determination by the Planning Director

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Proposed Ada Township Capital Improvements Plan, 2010-2016

Korth noted that the annual preparation of a Capital Improvements Plan is a new task for the Planning Commission to complete on an annual basis. Korth asked Ferro to provide some background information regarding the plan.

Ferro stated that the Planning Commission had an introduction to capital improvement plans earlier in the year. He noted that the plan is a guideline document that looks six years into the future and identifies the capital facility projects that the Township plans to undertake. Ferro stated that examples of major investments are: new, expanded or major rehabilitated projects, major vehicle investments, parks and recreation facilities, trails, etc. Ferro stated they have gone through a process of having department heads and chief elected officials identify potential projects and submit summary forms describing those projects with estimated costs. A CIP Committee composed of the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and Planning Commission members Korth and Easter has reviewed the submitted projects and financials regarding the projects and evaluated how much money the Township is likely to have available for capital improvements. Ferro stated that the revenue available for capital improvements includes Township revenues that are over and above that needed for annual operating expenses, plus any outside funding sources such as grants. The capital improvements plan is organized according to the major fund account of the Township. Ferro next stated some of the key financial assumptions in the Plan are: (1) We will see a decline in total property tax base of 2.5% for the next year; with property tax base flat thereafter; (2) the annual Township operating expenses will increase at a rate of 1.5% per year. Ferro next went on to highlight some of the specifics of the plan and the projects it includes. Ferro also noted that there is a listing in the Plan of projects that are not anticipated to be funded within the next 6 years. They include several projects shown on the Township trail plan, as well as several major street, streetscape and park projects in the Village that were identified in the Ada Village Design Charrette process.

Korth stated that this plan concept comes out of a new state requirement wherein townships have to prepare these plans annually. He believes there is a need to have more input from the public on the plan priorities, and that use of consultant-facilitated focus groups has been identified as a good tool for obtaining this input.

Lowry asked about the increase of cost for sewer and water and how this fits into the plan. Ferro stated that the water and sewer funds are segregated funds, with the utility systems self-supported by user revenue. Revenues in these funds cannot be used for any other purpose in the Township.

Rhoades stated that the Township Board has not seen the draft CIP yet – but there were comments at an earlier Board work session that they want to keep the fund balance where it is and they cannot do this and accomplish all of these projects with the way the economy is. A lot of projects that would come out of the general fund could be cut out.

The public hearing was opened. There were no comments. The hearing was then closed.

Korth suggested sending the draft Plan back to the committee for completion of the detail behind the plan and then present a document that is ready for approval.

Easter stated there is about \$140,000 a year that comes out of the general fund that pays for salary and benefits for parks and recreation. She asked if this is something that should be looked at.

Korth stated there has to be a point where the group states this is a reasonable figure to aim for and right now they are below that. Korth asked if the Commissioners felt it would be useful to utilize focus groups.

Rhoades stated he does not believe it is necessary at this point until more fine-tuning is done to the plan.

Easter believes the focus groups are needed to identify what the community expects. She believes it is important to give this data to the trustees in order for them to be able to make a more informed decision. There was also discussion regarding utilizing a survey to obtain public input.

Motion by Paul, second by Rhoades, to send the Capital Improvements Plan proposal back to the CIP Committee, pending final revisions for consideration by the Commission.

Motion passed unanimously.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Revisions to Agricultural District, Creation of New Rural Preservation-1 and Rural Preservation-2 Zoning Districts, and Re-Zoning of Land to the New Districts.

Ferro stated this was last discussed at special meeting held on October 28, 2009. At that meeting it was determined there are several areas that need to be looked at, such as obtaining available information on the traffic capacity of the two bridges across the river, what the zoning densities are in adjoining lands in Cannon, Vergennes and Grattan Townships, and how the location of gravel roads might be taken into consideration in setting zoning district boundaries. There was feedback on possible alternatives to consider to modify the original proposal.

Ferro passed out information to the Commissioners regarding zoned residential densities in the adjoining townships. There was discussion regarding the bridges/capacity of the bridges (2 lanes versus 4 lanes), etc. Ferro noted that based on the information he was able to find regarding the capacity of 2-lane and 4-lane roads, the capacity of the bridges themselves is not an issue.

Ferro referred Commission members to the proposed changes to the existing open space development rules contained in the zoning regulations. He pointed out that these rules were adopted in 2003 in response to a new requirement contained in the State zoning statute. He noted that these rules currently contain no density incentive, but that in the proposed changes, a density incentive is provided by allowing open space plans to have the same density as is currently allowed – 1 unit per 3 acres.

The Commissioners next discussed private roads versus public roads. Korth questioned with a public road not being a through road, who is responsible for paying for its upkeep, etc.? Ferro stated it is 55%

Township/45% County. Korth also asked if an assessment can be required on new lots to self-fund road upkeep. Ferro stated he was doubtful whether such an assessment could be established.

Korth next invited public comments.

Ted Smith, 680 McCabe Ave., stated he is a large property owner in the Township. He distributed written comments for the Commission's consideration. He stated he believes this proposal will accomplish the opposite of what the Commission intends. He spoke about the reduction in property values, acceleration of open space loss, additional traffic issues, encouragement of undesirable developments, and the creation of pressure on the areas they want to preserve.

Bastian Blok, 6365 4 Mile Rd., asked about building a house on agriculturally zoned land and how this will change. He stated that with a very low density residential pattern, the deer population can't be controlled, and he is concerned with the financial impact of deer on his agricultural operations.

Korth suggested that Ferro incorporate the language into the current draft and then set a new public hearing on it once it has been drafted.

Ferro stated that a public hearing could be held in December if the Commission wanted.

Paul stated he believes the current draft open space development density incentive accomplishes the goals of the master plan. He stated it gives the opportunity to the private property owner to add value by using the open space plan provisions. He believes growth will be seen, especially in the north. If the proposed changes to the new zoning districts were adopted and then overlay it with the open space preservation provisions, this should accomplish what everyone wants and he believes the Township will be better because of it. He believes there has been enough input on this.

Korth stated it is best to have the language in its most final form when holding a public hearing and that is why he suggests another hearing.

Lowry stated that changing the zoning from 3 to 5 acres and 10 acres has not worked in other areas, based on the literature we have reviewed.

Korth stated we can still go ahead and change the overt zoning by right to the lesser densities but overlay it with this document regarding the use of the open space plan.

Easter asked about utilizing the same density and how splits would work.

Korth stated they are debating over whether or not to use PUD language or specific state statutes for open space development.

Ferro stated there are quite a few design standards in the state statutes. Korth stated that as long as they are preserving over 50% of the land as open space, the clustering of the houses can go under the 3 acre minimum as long as they are at least an acre in size.

Easter stated her concern is when they spread out so much it is counter-productive for communities.

Lowry asked about sewer in relation to the lot sizes. Ferro noted that the developer has to identify a primary drain field area and a suitable replacement drain field area on each lot in order to obtain a County Health Department permit.

Following discussion, it was decided to have a special work session meeting on December 1, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. to discuss the idea of PUD zoning versus open space design incentives.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

William Biel stated he owns 30 acres on Vergennes and he likes the idea of keeping the 3 acres parcels rather than dividing them into 5 acres. He believes they are not getting a lot of development and he would hate to see people from another township coming into Ada Township and getting more acres for the same amount of money. You will also get more tax dollars for 3 acre lots compared to 5 acre lots.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Easter, second by Lowry, to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Susan Burton, Township Clerk

Rs:lm